throughout the country and organising science activities for children.

(c) Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), through its network of 261 Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the country ensure effective transfer of the results of R&D to agriculture, alongwith agriculture universities. This includes demonstration of technologies to farmers, training and on-farm testing of technologies on farmers' fields.

To ensure that the results of research are transferred to industry, the steps taken include assignment of successfully completed projects to National Research and Development Corporation (NRDC) for technology transfer to industries, development of linkages between research establishments and industries, and through S&T entrepreneurship development programmes. A Technology Development Board has been set up in 1996 under Department of Science & Technology to provide financial assistance to the industrial concerns attempting commercial application of technologies, both indigenous and imported.

Intellectual Property Rights

1371. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government are aware of the report published in the Indian Express dated 22nd May, 1997 captioned, "Scientists see a threat in Wisner remark";

(b) If so, whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the warning by the US Ambassador, Frank Wisner that cooperation between Indian and American scientists could be jeopardised unless India tightened its intellectual property rights (IPR) regime; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) There are some differences on the intellectual property rights which have had an impact on efforts to work out a new science and technology agreement between India and the USA. Cooperation in science and technology between the two countries has been an ongoing process through last four decades, primarily at the level of scientific agencies, and also under the Indo-US Sub-Commission on Science & Technology. This cooperation continues. Indian position on intellectual property rights, based on the social and economic requirements of the country, is known to the US side.

New Steel Plants during the Ninth Five Year Plan

1372. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up some new public sector big/medium/small steel plants in the country during the Ninth Five Year Plan period;

(b) if so, the details alongwith locations thereof, State-wise;

(c) the expenditure likely to be incurred thereon, plant-wise;

(d) the criteria for selection of any site in the State;

(e) the quantity of steel likely to be increased by setting up any new steel plant alongwith period thereof; and

(f) the number of pending applications for setting up of new steel plants particularly from North Eastern States and by when these are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (e) According to the New Industrial

Policy announced in July, 1991, iron and steel have been removed from the list of industries reserved for the Public Sector and also delicensed subject to certain locational restrictions. Further, the Union Government do not have any proposal at present to set up new/greenfield Public Sector Steel Plant in the Country. However, MMTC and MECON, both Central Public Sector Undertakings and IPICOL, a Government of Orissa Undertaking are jointly setting up a steel plant at Duburi, Distt. Jajpur in Orissa with envisaged overseas equity participation. The steel plant with an estimated investment of Rs. 1510 Crores will produce 6.2 lakh tpa steel and 4.90 lakh tpa pig iron. The pig iron production is expected to commence in October, 1998 and steel production with effect from October, 1999.

(f) No industrial license application is pending from the North Eastern States for setting up of new steel plants.

Decline in Profit of SAIL

1373. SHRI SOM PAL: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is correct that Steel Authority of India Limited has recorded decline in its profits during the year 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details and reasons thereof;

(c) what have been the figures of profit or loss during the previous four years in the Company; and

(d) the steps being taken to improve its profitability?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The profit (before tax) in SAIL in 1996-97 was Rs. 602.* crores as compared to Rs. 1318.61 crores in 1995-96. During the year 1996-97 SAIL had to face abnormal increase in input costs on account of cost escalation in coal price, petroleum price, railway freight, power tariff, special custom duties etc. The impact of these escalations is about Rs. 1000 crores while only a part of this impact could be neutralised through improvement in operational efficiencies. Other reasons, which have affected the profitability, include decline in the international prices of steel and freer imports bringing the margins under stress as also the sluggish market behaviour etc. due to which SAIL could not pass on the impact of input cost escalation to the customers.

(c) The details of profit (before tax) for the previous four years are as under:—

(Rs. in Crores)@

1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
423	545	1163	1319

(d) SAIL is taking steps on a continuous basis to improve its performance, which include modernisation and technological upgradation of its plants, improving techno-economic factors i.e. reduction in coke rate, energy consumption, metallic input, improvement in yield, extensive customer contact, market oriented product-mix, improvement in quality, long term relationship with customers, leadership in service and customer satisfaction, strict control and monitoring of operating costs, higher productivity and greater autonomy to field officers, etc.

*Subject to CAG audit.

@ Rounded off to 0 decimal place.

Expert Committee to Examine Modernisation of Two Steel Plants

1374. SHRI GYAN RANJAN: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to news-item captioned "SAIL worried over its two steel plants",